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Chairman: Mr. Matute (Vice-Chairman) (Peru)

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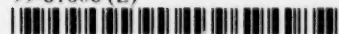
Agenda item 100: Environment and sustainable development

- (a) Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21

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In the absence of Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti), Mr. Matute (Peru), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 100: Environment and sustainable development (A/54/24 and Add.1, A/54/80, A/54/98, A/54/212 and A/C.2/54/5)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 (A/54/131-E/1999/75)

1. **Mr. Amin** (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)), reading a statement on behalf of the Executive Director, said that over the previous year, the Programme had moved to effectively implement its new vision and programme of work. It had endeavoured to build on its traditional strengths and solidify the institutional and operational modalities needed to position it to meet the evolving challenges and expectations of the new millennium. In the context of globalization, developed and developing countries alike were confronted with the challenge of environmental sustainability. The present course of development was unsustainable and action could no longer be postponed. Underpinning many of the environmental problems that the international community was facing was the poverty of the majority of the planet's inhabitants and excessive consumption by the minority. Solutions to those complex environmental challenges required differentiated approaches that would place enormous demands on policy design and implementation at all levels and would require solid and concerted institutional responses. In that regard, the integration of environmental thinking into the mainstream of decision-making relating to agriculture, trade, investments, research and development, infrastructure and finance was now the best chance for effective action.

2. At its twentieth session, the Governing Council had adopted important decisions with regard to three fundamental issues: revitalizing policy issues as contained in the programme of work, reform and financing. He highlighted the key outcomes of the session, as contained in the Council's report (A/54/25), including decision 20/19, which had allowed the environmental dimension to be fully taken into account in the deliberations of the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The Governing Council session had given concrete support to the integrated work programme of UNEP, which was based on five areas of concentration — environmental monitoring, assessment, information and research, including early warning, enhanced coordination of environmental

conventions and development of environmental policy instruments; freshwater; technology transfer in industry; and support to Africa — and had endorsed its new functional organizational structure.

3. Within its first area of concentration, UNEP had undertaken a series of initiatives to strengthen its capacity in the areas of information, monitoring and assessment of environmental trends and early warning information on environmental threats, so as to catalyse and promote international cooperation and action. It was working to expand and strengthen its network of environmental information and monitoring centres of excellence, such as the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) and the Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA), and was also exploring the possibility of establishing centres in other key environmental areas, such as land degradation.

4. In the area of enhanced coordination of environmental conventions, the Programme had carried out a number of initiatives in cooperation with the respective governing bodies of the environmental conventions, to develop coherent interlinkages among the conventions with a view to achieving synergies and multiple benefits and promoting coherence of policies and actions. In the area of freshwater management, UNEP had worked to define a new water strategy for the Organization. Key components of its water policy would include reliable, accessible and pertinent assessment and management activities and enhanced coordination arrangements.

5. In its fourth area of concentration, the UNEP approach, which emphasized the need for cleaner production, changing consumption patterns and the potential risk of chemical products, was based on the belief that the international community must stimulate the development of environmentally friendly technologies. Within that area, solid progress had been made in the drafting of a global treaty to reduce and eliminate environmental emissions and discharges of persistent organic pollutants.

6. As far as support to Africa was concerned, UNEP was undertaking a number of initiatives within the framework of the Special Initiative for Africa, and through the development of policy support and capacity-building for international negotiation.

7. With regard to finance, Governments had recognized the need for UNEP to have adequate, stable, and predictable financial resources if it was to effectively meet the expectations of Member States. A decision had been taken to broaden the funding base, and the Council had authorized an increased budget of US\$ 120 million for the next biennium, which was a particularly significant demonstration

of renewed confidence in UNEP. In the area of reform, the Council had adopted a very significant decision (20/17) based on its consideration of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on environment and human settlements (A/53/463). UNEP was moving to effectively implement the proposals contained in General Assembly resolution 53/242 and would be receiving further practical guidance in that regard from its High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials, which would be considering the implementation of the reform recommendations at their meeting in Bonn at the beginning of November 1999, within the framework of the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

8. **Mr. Arungu-Olende** (Department of Economic and Social Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 (A/54/212), said that energy played a vital role in achieving the interrelated economic, social and environmental objectives of sustainable development. Meeting that role would require significant financial, human and technical resources as well as a broad-based mix of energy sources. The World Solar Programme was the outcome of a concerted effort by the World Solar Commission and entities within and outside the United Nations system under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Within the United Nations system, efforts continued to be made to promote policies and programmes in renewable energy resources, and to foster cooperation in the implementation of global, regional and national projects. Such activities were intended to promote energy efficiency and more widespread development and application of renewable energy technologies. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs had taken several initiatives with respect to the development and use of renewable sources of energy, including training seminars, workshops and symposia, as well as technical assistance in building institutional capacities for renewable energy development and introducing technologies for the development and use of renewable energy sources in small island States.

9. Significant progress had been made at the international level and by individual Governments, entities of the United Nations system, and other organizations in the implementation of the World Solar Programme 1999-2005.

10. **Ms. Critchlow** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that despite the challenges faced by developing countries, the Group of 77 and China remained committed to the quest for sustainable development. The implementation of Agenda 21 would

require both developing and developed countries to address issues such as the fulfilment of commitments made at major world conferences, the transfer of environmentally sound technology, capacity-building and training, debt relief and reduction of the gap between the developing and developed worlds. Although some progress had been made, overall trends with respect to the global environment had not improved.

11. The Group of 77 and China stressed the need for adequate preparation for the upcoming 10-year review of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The views of Member States should be taken into account in determining the form, scope and modalities of the preparatory process to be discussed by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eighth session. It would also be useful for the Secretary-General to present to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session an analytical report describing the contribution of United Nations bodies to the implementation of Agenda 21, constraints limiting further progress in the implementation process and recommendations for addressing such constraints.

12. The Group of 77 and China welcomed the progress in implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 and, in particular, the increased use of solar energy in rural electrification programmes, but reiterated the need for increased financing to promote the use of such energy.

13. The Group of 77 and China regretted that it had been unable to discuss international institutional arrangements related to the environment and development because the report of the Secretary-General on that issue was not yet available. The report should be issued as soon as possible and the Convention secretariats should hold a formal briefing for all delegations.

14. It was gratifying to note the inclusion of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in the process of United Nations reform.

15. **Ms. Päävöke** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries of Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and, in addition, Iceland, said that the European Union supported the efforts by the Executive Director to strengthen the linkage with the Global Environment Facility. However, careful consideration was needed when drawing the line between the catalytic function of UNEP and the pilot character of its activities, and the large scale operational activities of implementing agencies such as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

16. Concerning the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, the European Union welcomed the efforts being made by the United Nations system to address constraints such as the lack of institutional capacity and vagueness in mandates and respective roles through various inter-agency consultative processes and the steps being taken to promote better managerial practices and greater motivation of staff within the overall effort to streamline bureaucratic procedures. In that regard, the lack of coherence in intergovernmental decision-making deserved special attention. The European Union agreed with the Secretary-General that a more coordinated and integrated approach was needed to the follow-up of all recent major United Nations conferences in order to achieve synergies and to ensure a more efficient and effective use of limited resources.

17. The work of the World Solar Programme would constitute a valuable contribution to the debate in the Commission on Sustainable Development in 2001. While the European Union welcomed the efforts of the Ad Hoc Inter-agency Task Force on Energy to enhance the overall coordination and promotion of synergies of all energy-related activities, it wished to stress the importance of linkages between the international, intergovernmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

18. The development of greater energy efficiency, sustainable consumption patterns and alternative forms of energy, including solar energy, were all highly relevant to the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, thereto.

19. **Mr. Farar** (United States of America) said that his delegation supported the activities of the Commission on Sustainable Development in its role of providing primary oversight in the review of the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national, regional and international levels. It also supported the Commission's efforts to expand interaction with major groups, including non-governmental organizations and business and industry. While his delegation believed that the role of civil society was crucial for the effective realization of sustainable development goals, it would caution against those who sought to have the Commission's process duplicate or otherwise unduly influence issues and negotiations on matters better left in the forums where they were more appropriately addressed.

20. His delegation supported the goals of the Biodiversity Convention. Preserving biodiversity had incalculable benefits in areas ranging from medical research to agriculture. The United States was also keenly interested in

the United Nations negotiations on biosafety, since those negotiations could have wide-scale implications for trade in agricultural products, particularly with respect to the cross-border movements of bioengineered foods. In that regard, President Clinton had made clear that the United States would continue to protect food safety, including bioengineered food products. The entire world stood to benefit from biotechnology advances. In order for the international community to attain a successful agreement dealing with biosafety matters, it would need to work together to ensure that the promise of biotechnology was well understood.

21. Global climate change was the main environmental challenge of the twenty-first century for scientific consensus was that human activity had begun to affect the climate. The United States was fully committed to meeting that challenge, both by reducing domestic greenhouse gas emissions, and by working with other nations to achieve agreement on a sound cost-effective, global strategy. It looked forward to participating in the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

22. Desertification was another area where international cooperation was needed. Dryland degradation, or desertification, was a growing problem that threatened the well-being of millions of people in many parts of the world, and in particular in Africa. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification sought to mitigate the effects of dryland degradation and prevent further desertification through collaboration at the local level, and in partnership with communities, non-governmental organizations and national Governments. The United States, which currently spent millions of dollars in humanitarian aid to drought-affected countries, strongly supported the aims of the Convention. It looked forward to the upcoming third session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention where, for the first time, countries would present elements of their national action plans and where the debate could focus on methods to alleviate dryland degradation.

23. His delegation stood behind the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and recognized the many pressing issues that bore upon the small island State's progress towards sustainable development, including the public health and economic effects of global warming, the conservation of fish stocks and the strain that increased tourism placed on local infrastructure. It looked forward to continued partnership efforts to support the progress of small island developing States. In that regard, it was important to develop, within the appropriate forums, clear, scientifically based proposals

consistent with international law to promote environmentally sound development.

24. **Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) said that his country attached great importance to sustainable development at the global, regional and national levels. It had developed a legislative framework for environmental protection and a national concept of sustainable development, and was working on legal, administrative and economic instruments to ensure sustainable development. The Russian Federation had played an active role in all the major international processes for environmental protection.

25. His delegation attached great importance to reforms in the environmental sector of the United Nations. In that context, it welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 53/242 and was in favour of its early implementation. His delegation supported the processes under way in UNEP and the decisions adopted by the Governing Council, at its twentieth session, with a view to enhancing the Programme's efficiency and strengthening its role.

26. His delegation welcomed the international community's efforts to implement the decisions of the Rio Conference and the outcome of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly. In that context, it also welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on measures taken in the United Nations system to accelerate progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 (A/54/131), particularly its analysis of the difficulties facing United Nations agencies and of funding issues. Stressing the key role played by the Commission on Sustainable Development in the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, he expressed the hope that, at its next session, the Commission would take practical and meaningful decisions concerning forest and energy issues, with input from the World Solar Programme 1996-2005, whose activities should be supported.

27. His delegation attached importance to the 10-year review of the implementation of Agenda 21, which should provide an occasion for an in-depth analysis of environmental issues. It noted with satisfaction the timetable established by the Commission on Sustainable Development and the General Assembly for the preparatory work for the special session.

28. The General Assembly should make every effort to consider the environmental conventions in a holistic and comprehensive manner and to establish synergies among them. In that context, his delegation attributed great importance to the continued implementation of General

Assembly resolution 53/186. His delegation would discuss its position in further detail at a later stage.

29. **Ms. Garcia** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, expressed support for the conclusions of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, particularly with regard to eradicating poverty and changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns. While States bore primary responsibility for achieving the objectives of Agenda 21, it was also vital to intensify international cooperation to that end. The transfer of financial resources and technological cooperation on the basis of equity and sustainability must form the basis for such efforts. During the historic meeting of Heads of State and Government of the Latin American and Caribbean countries and the States members of the European Union, held in Rio de Janeiro in June, leaders had agreed to promote initiatives for cooperation and exchange in the field of science and technology, with emphasis on the linkages between production processes and scientific and technological research, taking into account ecological concerns and their impact on sustainable development in the two regions. In implementing Agenda 21, it was particularly important to facilitate the transfer of technology to deal with natural disasters, which were a major obstacle to development, particularly in the developing countries. Natural disaster management required an integral approach.

30. The Rio Group attached great importance to the ratification and implementation of the conventions on biodiversity, climate change and desertification. The States members of the Rio Group looked forward to the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Bonn; to the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa; and to the negotiation of a biosafety protocol that would reconcile the exploitation of biotechnology with the preservation of biological resources.

31. She stressed the primary role of the Commission on Sustainable Development in the preparations for the forthcoming 10-year review of the implementation of Agenda 21. The States members of the Rio Group were doing their share to implement the decisions taken at the Rio Conference; however, the achievement of sustainable development would require the political will of the developed countries and the assistance of the international financial institutions.

32. **Mr. Oratmangun** (Indonesia) said that progress on environmental issues had fallen far short of expectations. The establishment and expansion of the system of task managers should help to enhance implementation of Agenda 21 and ensure a coordinated response to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development and other intergovernmental agencies. However, lack of coordination and limited resources continued to hinder implementation of the programmes of action of the various United Nations conferences and summits. United Nations efforts in that regard could not succeed unless both the developed and the developing countries fulfilled their commitments in a spirit of global partnership and on the basis of common but differentiated responsibilities.

33. Unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, particularly in the developed countries, were the primary sources of environmental degradation and destruction. The persistent poverty of developing countries also contributed to the problem, but those countries could do little to implement Agenda 21 without additional financial resources, the transfer of environmentally friendly technology and enhanced capacity-building. Those needs had been reiterated at numerous global forums and in legally binding conventions and instruments on environmental protection, yet there had been no significant improvement in the quality of the global environment.

34. He welcomed the international community's continuing efforts to give poverty eradication the highest priority at the national and international levels, and his Government fully supported the goal of halving the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. However, that would be possible only if the donor countries met the official development assistance (ODA) target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP).

35. He hoped that more substantive progress in the area of the environment would have been achieved by the 10-year review of implementation of Agenda 21 and, in that regard, proposed the initiation of a preparatory process involving Member States, the Commission on Sustainable Development, regional commissions and the relevant functional commissions and other bodies of the United Nations system. Preparations for the review should be undertaken as soon as possible so that barriers to the implementation of Agenda 21 and of the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 could be identified and so that effective recommendations to overcome those barriers could be formulated. Lastly, it was imperative to avoid introducing any issues other than those already incorporated in the Rio consensus.

36. **Mr. Leiro** (Norway) said that, despite the adoption of the environmental conventions and the various initiatives taken since the Rio Conference — the work under the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, negotiations regarding persistent organic pollutants (POPs), efforts to strengthen UNEP and the Commission on Sustainable Development — the global environment had continued to deteriorate. Two thirds of the world's population would have insufficient freshwater resources by the year 2025, and carbon dioxide emissions continued to rise in all regions of the world. The failure of the United Nations system to achieve its environmental objectives could be attributed to, *inter alia*, lack of sufficient resources and institutional capacity, vague mandates, inconsistent decisions in various governing bodies and inadequate coordination. It was to be hoped that reforms in the field of environment and human settlements, including the establishment of an environmental management group pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/242, would help the United Nations system to deal with those problems.

37. Political and other constraints impeded implementation of environmental policies at the national level as well. It was therefore vital to ensure that environmental and economic policies were linked. Given the shortfall in resources requirements for implementing Agenda 21, the declining trends in official development assistance and in funding from international development institutions must be reversed. At the national level, resources for sustainable development should be mobilized and earmarked for capacity-building and strengthening institutions, and for establishing the legal framework necessary to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources.

38. His delegation hoped that, at the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, progress would be made towards the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol. The Protocol's flexible mechanisms, particularly its clean development mechanism, would be crucial to mobilizing resources not only to combat climate change but also to expand sustainable development initiatives, particularly with regard to the transfer of technology and capacity-building.

39. The 10-year review of the implementation of Agenda 21 should focus on the eradication of poverty, a major obstacle to sustainable development, and apply lessons learned in the past decade. In that context, his delegation agreed with the Secretary-General on the need for a more coordinated approach to the follow-up of all the recent major United Nations conferences. That issue could be meaningfully pursued during the coordination segment of the Economic and Social Council in the year 2000.

40. In conclusion, he stressed the importance of national and local initiatives — in Norway, a preparatory process to implement Agenda 21 in local communities was already under way — and of a holistic, cross-sectoral approach that integrated environmental, economic and social concerns.

41. **Mr. Loizou** (Cyprus) stressed the importance of environmental issues for small States, particularly small island States, which were more susceptible to environmental risks and threats, such as natural disasters, sea-level rise, marine pollution, deforestation, desertification, soil erosion, overfishing and the limited availability of fresh water. The twenty-second special session of the General Assembly had heightened international awareness of the problems of small island States. Nonetheless, the ability of those States to influence global affairs was limited.

42. Cyprus had developed an Environmental Action Plan and a Strategic Development Plan on the basis of the documents adopted at the Earth Summit, the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and its accession negotiations with the European Union. Cyprus was also associated with, *inter alia*, the UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan, the European Union's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the "Environment for Europe" process. In its efforts to harmonize its environmental and economic policies, his Government sought input from its population, the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

43. The right to a high-quality environment was recognized in the Declaration on the Right to Development; the right to a secure environment, free from external security threats, had been emphasized by the alliance of Small Island States at the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. His country, however, was an unfortunate victim of foreign aggression and occupation, which had caused suffering to its people, destruction of its economic resources and severe damage to its environment and cultural heritage. Moreover, recent earthquakes in the area had interfered with plans to construct a coastal nuclear power plant on the northern coast.

44. Cyprus was prepared to share its expertise and experience with small States in such areas as solar energy, sustainable tourism and planning. All countries should undertake their common but differentiated responsibilities with a view to cooperating in such areas as integrated watershed and coastal-zone management, the protection of freshwater resources, the reduction of waste generation, the preservation of biological diversity and the management of protected areas as well as approaches to the impact of

tourism and efforts to ensure the sustainability of agricultural systems.

45. **Ms. Bai Yongjie** (China) expressed her delegation's support for the reform of UNEP and welcomed the progress made to that end. Her delegation hoped that General Assembly resolution 53/242 concerning the environment and human settlements would be swiftly implemented. Fully aware of its responsibilities at the national level, China was making every effort to implement Agenda 21 within the overall framework of its national development strategy.

46. Amid the economic, social and environmental pressures of globalization, developing countries were faced with the task of maintaining reasonable growth while, at the same time, enhancing environmental protection with a view to ensuring their sustainable development. Inadequate resources and lack of capacity were formidable obstacles to achieving that goal. She stressed the need for international cooperation and support for the efforts of the developing countries, both of which were key components of Agenda 21. In that connection, developed countries should translate their commitments into reality through concrete action.

47. The United Nations had a major role to play in helping its Member States to implement Agenda 21. In view of the enormous efforts necessary to overcome differences and reach consensus on issues of sustainable development, the Organization should mobilize political will more proactively, *inter alia*, by forcefully facilitating the implementation of various intergovernmental decisions, and also enhance coordination at both the intergovernmental and Secretariat levels — in the first case by asking agencies to make the necessary adjustments and in the second case, by establishing an environmental management group. The issue of funding should be integrated in the consideration of any new policy measures, since new projects would be difficult to implement without new and additional resources.

48. Lastly, the preparations for the 10-year review of the implementation of Agenda 21 should begin as soon as possible and should take into account the input of relevant international organizations.

49. **Ms. Oh Young-Ju** (Republic of Korea) said that the international community must seek to achieve tangible results during the second stage of the implementation of the Rio commitments. Progress towards sustainable development required the establishment of an international legal framework for managing deteriorating natural resources, enhanced coordination among international institutions in the environmental field, global guidance for

the emerging environmental agenda and the pursuit of feasible solutions for the implementation of Agenda 21.

50. With the rapid increase in the number of intergovernmental bodies related to the environment, effective linkages should be pursued in order to avoid overlap and inconsistency in implementation at the national and the global levels. The establishment of an environmental management group would be a positive step in that direction. A more systematic and focused approach to the implementation of Agenda 21 was needed, and in that context, the thematic approach of the Commission on Sustainable Development seemed relevant. Its recent decisions on the urgent issue of consumption and production patterns had been particularly welcome.

51. Financial resources and technology transfer played a key role in the implementation of Agenda 21. New and innovative approaches should be pursued to enable developing countries to secure those essential resources. The next session of the Commission on Sustainable Development would provide a valuable opportunity to explore policy measures to promote mobilization of financial resources and technology transfer.

52. As the new century began, the international community must forge a genuine partnership for global growth that was economically, environmentally and socially sustainable. Her delegation would do its utmost to achieve that goal.

53. **Mr. Shobokshi** (Saudi Arabia) said that the claims of sustainable development and environmental protection must both be accommodated, in accordance with the Islamic religion, which bade mankind make the earth thrive. His country had long since established a governmental agency for environmental affairs, to evaluate and regulate agricultural, industrial and other activities having an impact on the environment and to raise environmental awareness among the population. Emphasis had also been placed on the sustainable use of pastureland in semi-arid steppe regions, with a view to maintaining their productivity, and a national plan had been formulated for the management of inshore waters and regulation of the fisheries operating there, in order to avoid overfishing and prevent waste dumping. In addition, land and maritime reserves had been established, to protect various species of birds, animals and sea creatures.

54. Air and water quality standards had been developed, and monitoring was carried out on a regular basis to ensure that the environment was not polluted with hazardous wastes. The use of chemical pesticides had been markedly reduced in recent years, as more environmentally benign methods were adopted. Reforestation projects were under way, and sand dunes were being stabilized by the planting

of trees. Several national parks had been established, including one with an area of 450,000 hectares in the highlands of Asir Province.

55. In the area of energy, the gas commonly found with deposits of crude petroleum was being collected and treated, in order to avoid the harmful emissions that resulted from the practice of flaring. Lead levels in refined petroleum products had been reduced to enhance air quality in cities. At the same time, research on solar energy was being actively pursued. Solar energy was being used to produce hydrogen for fuel cells, among other applications.

56. **Mr. Aqeel Ba'Omar** (Oman) said that the gap between the developed and the developing countries was still growing. In order for that gap to be narrowed, a new trading system was needed, one that would enable the developing countries to accommodate their economies to the requirements of the free market. In addition, more official development assistance was essential in order for the developing countries, especially the least developed among them, to meet the challenges of globalization. The developed countries should fulfil their commitments in that connection.

57. His country's concern for the environment was second to none, and had earned it the praise of the United Nations Environment Programme. The Sultan Qaboos Prize for environmental preservation, awarded every two years, was evidence of that concern. Since numerous oil tankers passed through Oman's coastal waters, the maritime environment was particularly important to his Government, and consequently it supported the application of the recommendations of the International Conference on the Prevention of Pollution of the Sea by Oil. It also intended to establish a tanker wastewater receiving facility.

58. His Government was in regular communication with international bodies with competence in the area of dangerous chemicals, and had adopted legislative measures regulating their import, export, transport, handling and use.

59. His delegation applauded the work that was being done in connection with the Rio Declaration, but would like to see more assistance to the developing countries, to help them implement the objectives of the Declaration.

60. **Mr. Jokonya** (Zimbabwe) said that it was clear from the report of the Secretary-General on the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 (A/54/212) that solar power had raised the hopes of many as an alternative source of energy. It was time to rethink the potential contribution that solar energy could make to meet the global demand for energy in the new millennium. Practically all developing countries had ideal conditions for the utilization of solar energy.

61. The Programme was designed to address the energy concerns of both developing and developed countries in the long term. It contained a series of recommendations to be taken at the national, regional and global levels, and represented an open-ended attempt, through broad partnership and cooperation between Governments and other organizations, to promote the wider use and dissemination of renewable energy sources. It included high-priority national renewable energy projects, regional consultations in all parts of the world and global projects deemed by the international community to be of universal value.

62. Zimbabwe had taken the concept of renewable energy very seriously, as 70 per cent of its population lived in rural areas where only five per cent had access to grid-based electricity, with the rest depending on fuel-wood as their main source of energy. Thus far more than 10,000 solar homes had been constructed as well as a number of solar water pumping systems.

63. His delegation welcomed the collaborative linkages which appeared to be emerging between the various organs of the United Nations system in regard to the issue of renewable energy. UNDP and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the World Energy Council (WEC) were to be applauded for initiating the World Energy Assessment, which would make an important contribution to the preparations for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which would address energy and transport issues. It would be very useful, as well, if more information could be furnished by other entities of the United Nations system on activities relevant to the World Solar Programme. While many States had committed themselves to the implementation of the Programme, its success would require the commitment and unwavering support of the entire international community.

64. **Mr. Hamad** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)), said that UNESCO had organized or sponsored a number of events in the field of solar energy. The Director-General of UNESCO had continued his efforts to establish closer cooperation with the relevant organizations of the United Nations system, and had made contacts with the President of the World Bank and the Executive Director of UNEP. UNESCO was a member of the recently established Inter-Agency Task Force on Energy, and was participating actively in the preparations for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. A common system-wide approach to energy and sustainable development should be inclusive and all energy options should be reviewed. In that respect, the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 should be an important component of the renewable energy option.

65. **Mr. Nanjira** (World Meteorological Organization (WMO)) said that the significance of the question of environment and sustainable development lay in the all-embracing and cross-cutting nature of the issues at stake and their impact on the daily survival of humanity. The real challenge of United Nations reform lay in shifting from repetitive debate to the application of science and technology to sustainable development. The World Meteorological Organization was one intergovernmental organization which applied scientific and technological advances to the promotion of sustainable development. As a specialized agency of the United Nations system, it was responsible for international coordination in the fields of meteorology and hydrology to help predict, mitigate and prevent the negative impact which severe climate and weather-related events could have on development efforts.

66. It had been actively involved in implementation of Agenda 21 in areas regarding the protection of the atmosphere, climate change, depletion of the ozone layer, management of freshwater resources, drought and desertification and implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. In its activities, WMO had emphasized the sustainable development needs of Member States through the strengthening of national meteorological and hydrological services in order to promote their application to key sectors of national economies. In its future activities, it would continue to support the efforts of developing countries to enhance national capacity, support the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, in particular natural disaster reduction through improved weather forecasting and early warning systems, and pursue its efforts towards the implementation of the conventions on climate change and desertification.

67. **Ms. Núñez Mordoche** (Cuba) said that delegates to the recent special session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States had expressed concern at the lack of progress achieved in that regard. Globalization widened the gap between rich and poor countries, and although the threat of environmental degradation was universal, it was the developing countries that were most affected. The poor had no alternative to practices, such as the use of wood and coal, that were harmful to the environment. But it was the developing countries with their massive energy consumption that were the greatest contributors to greenhouse gases, the primary cause of climate change.

68. Globalization was accompanied by increasing environmental degradation and imposed a model of consumption that was totally unsustainable for the developing countries. It was imperative for those countries to participate in the decision-making process at the global level and for the international community to provide them with assistance in order to facilitate their sustainable integration into the global economy and, in particular, to give their imports increased access to international markets on preferential terms. ODA targets must be met on an adequate, predictable basis and technology transfer must be ensured under favourable conditions. Dialogue with donors must be pursued, but with more concrete results.

69. Despite the economic war to which Cuba had been subjected for the past 40 years, sustainable development, including fulfilment of the commitments made in Rio and Barbados, were among its top priorities. Her Government attached great importance to implementation at the regional level of Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action. Rich and poor countries must work together quickly to halt environmental degradation if they were to ensure their own survival.

Organization of work

70. **Ms. Fahmy (Egypt)** noted that owing to the late issuance of documents under agenda item 99 (Sustainable development and international economic cooperation), the Committee would be obliged to consider three reports in one day. She hoped that her delegation's concern at that failure to adhere to the six-week rule for the circulation of pre-session documentation would be reflected in the Committee's annual report.

71. **The Chairman** said he had taken note of the Egyptian delegation's remarks.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.